



THE LEGISLATURE
State of Hawaii

NEWS RELEASE

For Release on
May 15, 2006

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VICTORY FOR ANTI-COQUI FROG COMMUNITY

Legislature approves \$4.9 million for eradication and prevention efforts for coqui and other invasive species

Hilo, Hawaii. Big Island lawmakers today announced to a dedicated crowd of coqui frog fighters, invasive species experts and county officials that the legislature has appropriated over \$4.9 million toward an issue that has severely impacted the environment and the quality of life for many island residents. The increased funding is part of an overall plan that arms the community with greater resources to eradicate infestation, particularly the coqui menace, and to implement prevention programs for the threat of invasive species.

"The Big Island community requested additional assistance to control and eradicate coqui infestation, which has grown to over 5,000 acres on the island of Hawaii," said State Representative Clift Tsuji (District 3 – South Hilo, Puna, Keaau, Kurtistown). "In response, the Big Island team worked together to secure a large increase in funding for coqui frog eradication. The additional resources will help the state, county, business and community groups to strengthen their partnership."

The 2006 legislative accomplishments for coqui frog and invasive species are:

Funding

- **\$2 million for the control and eradication of coqui frogs**

Of that amount, **\$1,800,000** is focused on Big Island programs, breaking down as follows: \$1,000,000 for a grant to the County of Hawaii; \$300,000 to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for control and eradication; and \$500,000 to the Department of Agriculture for control, eradication and research. If Big Island infestations are not reduced, re-infestations of other island and restrictions on Hawaii's agricultural exports are likely.

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The remaining **\$200,000** will go toward eradication programs on other islands, with funding breaking down as follows: \$100,000 to treat 150 acres on Maui; \$50,000 to treat 14 acres on Oahu; and \$50,000 to treat 15 acres on Kauai. As infestations are under control on Maui, Oahu and Kauai, complete eradication is now the target on those islands.

- **\$2.9 million for prevention and control of invasive species in Hawaii**

The legislature approved a total of \$2,953,412 in general, federal, and airports/harbors special funds to hire 58 additional inspection staff. This breaks down to:

- \$2,230,412 in state general funds for 45 additional inspectors at state airports and harbors and rapid response capability
- \$430,000 in airports and harbors special funds for 11 additional inspectors
- \$293,088 in federal funds for 2 additional inspectors and scientific equipment

The federal government employs an inspection staff of 450 to keep the mainland safe from goods being shipped from Hawaii. In stark contrast, the Department of Agriculture currently employs only 75 inspectors to protect Hawaii from mainland and foreign invasive species.

Recent experimental risk assessments at Kahului and Honolulu airports showed that the Department of Agriculture detected only 1 out of 100 invasive species that should be detectable with the strategic use of additional resources.

Controlling and eradicating invasive species after infestation is time-consuming and much more costly than prevention. The potential harm to Hawaii ranges in the hundreds of millions of dollars if species such as the red imported fire ant, brown tree snake, biting midges or other invasive species are allowed into the state.

Laws and Resolutions Passed by the 2006 Legislature

"In addition to greatly increased funding, the legislature wanted to ensure that the government agencies responsible for pest eradication and the prevention of invasive species have the tools and structure they need to accomplish our goals," said Senator Russell Kokubun (District 2 – Waiakea Uka, Kalapana, Volcano, Kahuku), who introduced the two Senate bills. "My colleagues in the House and Senate have been very supportive of the community's needs, and I believe our experience on the Big Island will serve as a model for cooperative efforts against future invasive species infestations."

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Senate Bill 3076 - Relating to Coqui Frogs

This bill designates the coqui frog as a pest, which gives the Department of Agriculture the authority to control coqui on private lands, without permission if necessary.

Senate Bill 2486 – Relating to Invasive Species

This bill makes permanent the Hawaii Invasive Species Council, moves it from the Governor's Office to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for administrative purposes, and requires the participation of and consultation with one state senator and one state representative from each county for advice and assistance.

House Concurrent Resolution 11 – Requesting the Hawaii Invasive Species Council to Study and Report on Specific Strategies to Prevent the Spread of Coqui Frog and Other Invasive Species

House Concurrent Resolution 12 – Requesting Hawaii's Congressional Delegation to Seek Federal Funding to be used for Programs and Measures Intended to Prevent and Fight Against Invasive Species in Hawaii

Next Steps

Before the start of the next legislative session, the legislature will expect progress reports on the work accomplished by the County, State, Federal, Business and Community partners in this effort, as well as an indication on future needs. To date, the working groups have identified the following next steps:

Coqui Frog Eradication:

- Utilize nationally known resource people such as John Roberts, who will be in Hawaii from June 5-9, 2006 to develop coordinated incident command plans.
- Develop accurate baseline data on infestations and track control outcomes.
- Continue biocontrol research through University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Department of Agriculture for long term control and eradication.
- Seek more federal funds and better federal laws to supplement county, state and community efforts.

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- Develop coordinated, collaborative and unified control and eradication efforts by Coqui Frog Working Group (includes all government and nonprofit agencies involved.) Share strategies and experiences between islands and communities. Continue education and awareness so that entire community can contribute to the island-wide and statewide effort to control and eradicate coqui frogs.

Prevention and Control of Invasive Species

- The Department of Agriculture has applied for a \$2 million grant to pilot a joint inspection facility in Honolulu. Federal and state inspectors would be able to combine forces to keep invasive species from entering Hawaii from foreign and domestic sources, and to keep invasive species in Hawaii from being spread elsewhere. Most of the cargo in Hawaii enters through Honolulu. The 2006-2007 legislative funding is particularly timely and will be used as cost-sharing for the federal grant; previously, the department was limited in their grant seeking ability due to the lack of matching dollars. If the pilot joint inspection facility is successful, the plan is to seek more federal and state funds for a permanent facility in Honolulu, including rapid response and control capability.
- Department of Agriculture will hold a forum June 1-2, 2006 in Honolulu for national policy makers from agriculture, health, and conservation communities. The purpose of the forum is to strengthen interstate and international protection for Hawaii and U.S. Territories against invasion by foreign biota.
- Develop rapid response and control capabilities so new infestations can be controlled and eradicated immediately.
- Share strategies, experiences, and data between islands, states, and other countries.
- Develop compliance agreements between states where federal law does not allow sufficient control.
- Develop accurate baseline data on infestations and track control outcomes.
- Seek more federal funds and better federal laws to supplement county, state, and community efforts.
- Inform the community on how to help prevent and control invasive species, and provide updates on outcomes.
- Work with Hawaii airport and harbor users to propose user fees to fund heightened prevention efforts.

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